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OUTLINE OF THE IRANIAN LANGUAGES

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INTRODUCTION

Linguistics as science differs from simple practical knowledge of language because it seeks to establish causal relationships between the facts and phenomena of languages. Concrete languages change, develop, and enrich gradually dictionary structure, grammatical system. Iranian languages are not an exclusion. My interest to them embraces all aspects – morphological, phonological, and a bit cultural.

The Iranian etymological principles concern in many cases with common Indo-European tendency, so that my purpose is to clarify the nature and the place of the Iranian languages in the European system, applying for it comparative methods. In this respect, not only the direct meanings but also connotations can be traced as complementary. Manyfold examples one can find in Iranian philology in every direction, including the excellent work "Proto-Indo-European Trees. The Arboreal System of a Prehistoric People" by Mr Paul Fridrich:

Table 1

	Birch	**Bright**
Latvian	*berzs*	*birkstis*
Old Norse	*bjǫrk*	*bjartr*
Old High German	*birihha*	*beraht*
Iranian	**barzā*	*bráz*
Indic	*bhūrjá-*	*bhrājate*

On the one hand, we may suggest some folk etymological or connotational links between the birch names in Iranian and other languages and the various roots for associated qualities; on the other hand, we observe a derivation caused by the shifts in referential meaning of these languages. Of course, one may speak of strong and weak connotations. Yet I do not doubt that Indo-Iranian etymological system stays in the center of Indo-European language family.

This book is rather short for such difficult and large problem as the Iranian languages. In any case, I followed the most important works to elucidate the task. I aimed not to overload the reader with massive linguistic and historical examples which belong to the sphere of a specialist rather than of a layman.

I express my respect to the Krupskay Scientific Library for the preparation of this book.

Astrakhan, 2020

1
IRANIAN LANGUAGES IN INDO-EUROPEAN SYSTEM

The history of the Iranian languages as an independent language group begins with the period of its separation from the Indo-Iranian (Aryan) language community. Nevertheless, it is hardly possible to imagine the collapse of the Aryan linguistic community as a one-time act. This process took place during long and complex tribal regroupings and relocations, as a result of which part of the Aryan-speaking tribes, having crossed the Hindu Kush, entered the Indus basin. The dialects of this group of tribes, reflected in the language of the Vedic hymns, formed the basis of the Indo-Aryan languages.

The group of the Iranian languages is a part of a more extensive group of IE languages including, besides Iranian, such languages as Indian, Tokharian, Greek, Italic (Romance), Slavic, Baltic, German, Celtic, Albanian, Armenian.

From all IE languages, the Iranian is the closest to Indian forming the Indo-Iranian (Aryan) branch of IE languages. The Old Iranian languages are united with Old Indian in the numerous characteristics covering phonetics and dictionary structure of these languages, the systems of morphology, word formation and even syntax. Let us consider, for example, a paradigm of conjugation of the stem *bar- // bhar-* "to carry".

Table 2

Person	Avesta	Old Indian
	Singular	
1st ps.	*barāmi*	*bhárāmi*
2nd ps.	*barahi*	*bhárāsi*
3rd ps.	*bara^{i}ti*	*bhárāti*
	Plural	
1st ps.	*barāmahi*	*bhárāmasi*
2nd ps.	**baraϑā*	*bhárātha*
3rd ps.	*barənti*	*bhárānti*

Even syntactic structure of Avesta and Vedic is so close that, considering the known phonetic correspondence, it is possible to translate in some cases from Avesta's language into Vedic and back whole phrases, word by word. What is especially important: the Indian and Iranian languages show community not only in preservation of all IE elements, but also in identity (in some cases) of their development.

The main features that distinguish the ancient Iranian languages from the Aryan and Old Indian languages are found in the field of phonetics, mainly in the system of consonantism:

1) the Aryan voiced aspirated **bh, *dh, *gh* are reflected in Old Iranian as voiced simple (non-aspirated) *b, d, g*:

*bh // b: *bhrātar- // brātar-;

*dh // d: *dhār- // dar-;

*gh // g: *gharma- // garəma-, garma-;

2) the Aryan voiceless aspirated **ph, *th, *kh* are reflected in Old Iranian as the corresponding fricatives *f, ϑ, x*:

*ph // f: *kapha // kafa-, kaf;

*th // ϑ: *yathā // yaϑa-;

*kh // x: *khara- // xara-;

3) the Aryan voiceless **p, *t, *k* before the subsequent consonant are reflected in Old Iranian as the corresponding fricatives *f, ϑ, x*;

4) the Aryan **s* is reflected in Old Iranian as *h*.

The shifts characterizing the Iranian languages in their differences from the Aryan and Indo-Aryan are systemic in nature. The inherent contrast between the Aryan and Indo-Aryan dialects of *p – ph, t – th, k – kh* has been replaced in ancient Iranian languages by the contrast of *p – f; t – ϑ; k – x*, and the contrast of *ś – s* was replaced by the opposition of *s – h*.

Since there are certain discrepancies between the two Iranian languages – Old Persian and Avesta – in the field of sound composition and grammatical structure, the general Iranian state should be related to the time preceding the first Iranian language texts, i.e., in any case, to the period of the VI. century BC. The Proto-Iranian language is understood, therefore, to be nothing more than a retrospective projection of the historical-linguistic situation, which is recreated by linguists on the basis of actually witnessed Iranian (and Old Indian) languages.

It is necessary to keep in mind the following.

1. The period from the separation of Iranian languages (dialects) from the Indo-Iranian (Aryan) language community to the appearance of the first dated Iranian-language texts (the VI. century BC) covers at least a millennium in any case. During this time, Iranian dialects, distinguished from the Indo-Iranian (Aryan) language community, undoubtedly had to undergo certain changes in their phonetic and grammatical structure. It is hardly possible to imagine the common Iranian language as something monolithic, absolutely uniform in time.

2. In the same way, it is apparently impossible to imagine the common Iranian language as something absolutely uniform in space. By the middle of the I. millennium BC, Iranian-speaking tribes and nationalities were spread over a vast space from the shores of the Persian Gulf in the south-west to the Syr Darya in the north-east and from the Black Sea coast in the west to the borders of China in the East. Under these conditions, it is already a priori possible to assume the existence of a number of dialects of the common Iranian. This assumption is confirmed by the fact that the oldest Iranian language texts (ancient Persian, Avestian) reflect the presence of dialectal differentiations between these languages.

3. Phenomena generally Proto-Iranian or Prairanian are usually considered to be phenomena that coincide in Avesta and Old Persian or in Avesta and later the Iranian languages, mainly in Modern Persian. However, one cannot ignore that the ancient Persian and Avesta represent only two ancient Iranian dialects and that along with them there were numerous other Iranian dialects that were not recorded in writing. And it is likely that some ancient Iranian dialects had a number of features that

distinguish them from Avesta and Old Persian and, accordingly, from the "common Iranian", which is derived from a comparison of these two ancient languages.

This assumption is supported, for example, by the fact that a number of Middle and Modern Iranian languages (Sogdian, Sax-Khotan, Khorezm, Afghan, Ossetian, Pamir) do not share some important features that separate Avesta and Old Persian from Old Indian, and continue to be not that dialect type that formed the basis of the Old Iranian languages attested in the written language. As already noted, the Proto-Aryan voiceless *p, t, k* before the subsequent consonant are preserved in Indo-Aryan, but passed into the corresponding fricatives *f, ϑ, x* in Old Iranian.

Inside the IE languages, the Iranian languages are associated with particularly close proximity to the Indo-Aryan languages, forming with them the Indo-Iranian (or Aryan) branch of the IE languages. Especially important here is the fact that the Indo-Aryan and Iranian languages are common not only in the preservation of elements inherited from the common IE, but also in the same stage of development. First of all, some features of the sound development of the Indo-Iranian (Aryan) languages should be mentioned here, distinguishing them from other IE systems:

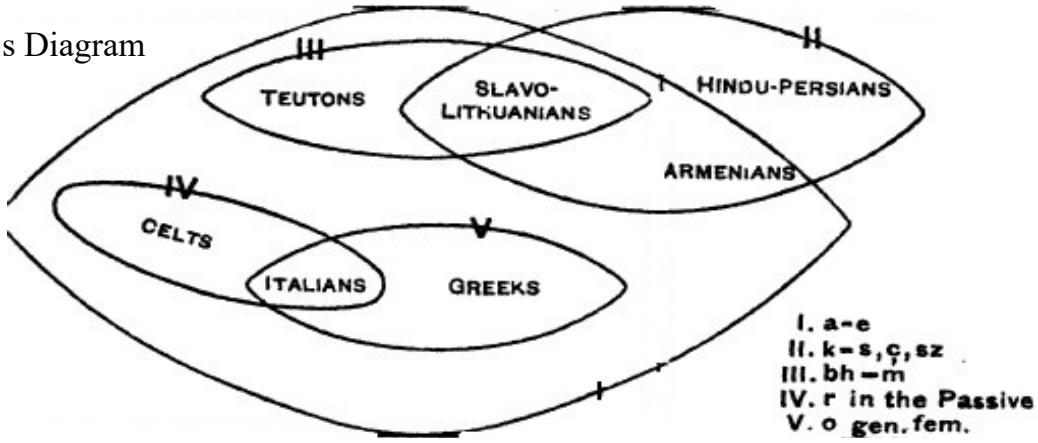
1) the coincidence in the Aryan **a, *ā* of the three IE vowels and two sonants – **a, *e, *o, *n, *m* and **ā, *ē,*ō, *ṅ, *ṁ* respectively;

2) the presentation of the IE **ə* as *i*;

3) the transition of the IE **s* after **i* (including **i* < the IE **ə*), **u, *r* (including **r* < the IE **l*), **k* in *s*-sound, etc.

Table 3

Schrader's Diagram



In the field of grammatical structure, the historical community of nominal and verb inflection, pronoun declension, word formation systems, syntactic constructions are especially indicative. Lexical isoglosses are also numerous, combining the Indo-Aryan languages with Iranian. Some attempts to refute the position of a particularly close kinship between the Iranian and Indo-Aryan languages by indicating that the majority of isoglosses uniting these two language families extend to other families of the IE group did not found any support by comparativists. According to recent estimates, the number of isoglosses combining Indo-Aryan with the Iranian languages (57) is more than double by the number of isoglosses combining them with the Baltic languages (22), Greek (27), Slavic (24), Armenian (13), etc. This again confirms the long-known position, requiring recognition of a relationship between Indo-Iranian

and Indo-Aryan, on the one hand, and Iranian, on the other. From the recognition of this provision, it necessarily follows that during the resettlement of the ancient tribes, the tribes who spoke the Indo-Iranian (Aryan) dialects maintained a linguistic (and, apparently, geographical, historical and cultural) community with each other rather than with the tribes spoken in other IE dialects.

The Persians have a genus that can also be found in the Germanic dialects. In the absence of their own gender words, they differentiate between an epicoenum *dureh* by the addition of *ner*, and *madeh*, corresponding to the English *man* and *maid*.

The number is two-fold, and the dualis, common in many oriental languages, is missing in Persian and German.

The plural ends with *an* and *ha*, like this in Gothic (e.g. waurd, waurd*a*, 'words'; akr*an*, akran*a*, 'fruits'), Anglo-Saxon (e.g. Witheta, pl.Wither*an*, Wiln, Wil*na*, 'the maids'; sunn, sun*a*, 'the sons'), Teutonic (Bruordr*a*, 'the brothers'); and in German can be found in the endings *en*, and *n* in vernaculars, e.g. in Austrian *an* and *a*, d'Flautn*a*, 'the flutes', d'Schlang*an*, 'the snakes'. In Greek and Latin, it seems to be only in neutra *παιδια, pecora*.

The cases are very simple, but of Germanic origin. The Genitive is formed by *ez, ex, aus*, as in German by *von* in the lower style, in English by *of*. Otherwise the word gets an appended *i*, pa*i* pur, pes puer*i*, 'the foot'; the *i* in *pueri* seems to combine with that in *pai*.

The dative is formed with *be* and appended *ra, re – be* mad*er*, 'the mother', or mader*ra*. That *beh* is nothing else than the German *bei*, in Anglo-Saxon *be, bi* completely Persian, that is, *bei der Mutter*. But just as the genitive, dative and accusative are expressed by *ra, rä*, so also in Anglo-Saxon, where the genitive, dative and ablative of the female adjective get *re*; god*re*. The vocative is either with superior *ei, o!*, or with an appended *a*, e.g. *bulbula*, as it is also found in Gothic.

2
CLASSIFICATION OF IRANIAN LANGUAGES

The historical-dialectological classification of the Iranian languages aims to elucidate the place that individual languages occupied in the system of the Iranian languages during its historical evolution, and thereby historical explanation of the relationship between the Iranian languages and their groupings in different periods of development. A more or less complete resolution of this problem – one of the most difficult problems of Iranian linguistics – rests in significant difficulties, the main of which is determined by the specifics of the material – first of all, the lack of information about the direct predecessors of numerous Middle and Modern Iranian languages, as well as the state of research in the field of historical Iranian linguistics.

These difficulties arise when trying to classify the numerous non-written Iranian languages and dialects. The picture that appears before the researcher is very complex and fragmentary, many intermediate links that could probably shed light on the relations between separate languages (dialects) are already irretrievably lost, and even with respect to the still unwritten Iranian languages (dialects), the level of research is not high enough. The complexity of the problem is determined not only by the limitations of our knowledge, but also by the lack of a developed system of criteria that could form the basis of the classification.

The most important proof of community of origin of the Iranian languages concerns their history. Let us take, for example, Modern Persian which is a direct continuation of Old Persian and Modern Ossetian which is continuation of Scythian. At first sight, there is nothing in common between the Persian *pedär* 'father' and the Ossetian *fidä*; between the Persian *pesar* 'son' and the Ossetian *furt* 'son'; between the Ossetian *fad* 'leg' and the Persian *pa(y)*. But following the history of the Persian language, we will see that the Persian words *pedär, pesär, pa(y)* go back through a long line of intermediate forms to the Old Persian *pitā* (*pitar-*), *puθra, pāda* ; now it is possible to be convinced that the Ossetian words *fidä, furt, fad* go back to the Scythian *pitā* (*pitar-*), *puθra-, pāda-*. Thus, the Persian *pa(y)* and the Ossetian *fad* are essentially two various modifications of the same Old Iranian word *pāda-* 'leg':

Persian: *pāda-> *pād>pāy>pa(y)* Ossetian: *pāda-> *fād>fad*

Changes of sounds in the Iranian language group happen naturally, i.e. the identical sounds which are in identical positions undergo, as a rule, identical changes.

Table 4

Tajik	**Persian**	**Ossetian**
padar	*pedär*	*fidā*
pisar	*pesar*	*furt*
po(y)	*pa(y)*	*fad*
panj	*pānj*	*fondz*

Similar sound compliances can be observed between all Iranian languages. The Iranian languages are a close group (family) of genetically related languages coming

from the one stem-language and connected with each other by grammatical system and fixed vocabulary inherited from this stem-language.

Thus, in the era of the Old Persian and Old Ossetian (Scythian) languages, i.e., approximately in the middle of the I. millennium BC, these languages were still very close to the Proto-Iranian state (see Taraporewala's table below).

Table 5

Old Iranian	Middle Iranian	Modern Iranian
Old Persian	Pahlavi ……. { Huzvaresh, Pazand, Parsi }	Irani (Farsi/Persian)
Median ……	…….	Kurdish, Ormuri
	…….	
	…….	Caspian....… { Mazandaran, Samnani, Gilaki, Tali } dialects
		Central ….... { Gabri, Kashani, Niyani, Vendi } dialects
…….	Turfan	West Iranian
Old Skyphian ……..	Saka	
Sarmatian ……	……?.....	East Iranian
		Ossetic
	……	Ghalchah ……. { Wakhi, Ishkashmi, Shighani, Roshani, Sariqoli, Muniani, Yidghah, Yaghnobi } (Pamir dialects)
……...	Soghdian ……	
Avesta …….	……?.....	Afghan …… { Pashto, Pakhto }
	……	Balochi …... { Makroni, East. Balochi }

In Mr Pritchard's classification there are four groups of languages. The first of is IE, sometimes termed Indo-Germanic, and by late writers the Iranian languages. He considers that the IE languages and nations may be divided into many different groups, in the order of their affinities for instance. It includes all the idioms of the ancient Medes and Persians, who named themselves *Arii*.

Mr Bunsen subdivides Asiatic European languages into eight families, viz. 1. Celts; 2. Thracian or Illyrian; 3. Armenian; 4. Asiatic-Iranian; 5. Hellenico-Italic, 6. Slavonic; 7. Lithuanian tribes, and 8. Teutonic. His fourth or Asiatic-Iranian, or the Iranian stock as represented in Asia, he again subdivides into

1. The languages of Media and Persia. It includes the Zend of the cuneiform inscriptions and the Zend Avesta, the younger Pehlevi of the Sassanians and the Pazend, the mother of the present or modern Persian tongue: The Pushtu or language of the Afghans belongs to the same branch.

2. The second subdivision embraces the Iranian languages of India, represented by the Sanskrit and her daughter.

The Iranian family of languages is called *Arian*, by Mr Farrar, it is the IE and Indo-Germanic of some philologists: Mr Pictet and Mr Burnous called it *Arian* too from the Sanskrit word *Arya* meaning 'noble'; Mr Bask called it *Japhetic*, and according to Mr Farrar, it has 8 divisions:

Hindu	| Greek	| Lithuanian	| Teutonic
Persian	| Latin	| Slavonic	| Celtic

The other classification can look like (according to Mr Taraporewala)

Table 6

Iranian languages	**West Iranian**	(Irānī) Persian	
		Ormuri (Bargistā)	
	East Iranian	Afgān	Pushtu
			Pakhto
		Balōcī	Makrāni
			Eastern Balōcī
		Pamir dialects	Wakhī
			Yidghāh

3
OLD IRANIAN LANGUAGES

The Parthian language is the language of ancient Parthia, a historical province south-east of the Caspian Sea. By the era of political dominance of the Arshakids dynasty originating from Parthia (the III. century BC), Parthian as a language of government apparently received a certain distribution throughout the Parthian kingdom. Like Middle Persian, Parthian is represented by monuments in two writing systems – the Parthian and Manichean proper. In the Parthian writing itself, Parthian versions of the Sassanian inscriptions and economic documents of the I. century reached us. The vocabulary of Parthian inscriptions is included in the glossary of Mr Gignoux. Starting from the III. century BC, the Manicheans used the Parthian language, along with Middle Persian, for their missionary activities in Khorasap, Maverannahr and East Turkestan. The Manichaean texts in the Parthian language created in that era and partially survived to us serve as the main source for its study.

The Sogdian language is the language of ancient Sogd – the valley of Zeravshan and the surrounding areas. Due to the large role played by the Sogdians in trade relations of Central Asia with the Far East and the creation of trade colonies along the Great Silk Road, the Sogdian language acquires the meaning of *lingua franca* in the first centuries of our era and is used far beyond its homeland. Sogdian texts have come down to us in various varieties of writing – the so-called "Sogdian national writing", the Manichaean (texts of Manichaean content) and Syriac (texts of Christian content) writing. The last written monuments of the Sogdian language and the latest testimonies relate to the period when there is a gradual process of crowding out the Sogdian language in part by Persian (Tajik), partly Turkic dialects.

The Khorezmian language is the language of ancient Khorezm – the region along the Amu Darya. The surviving monuments of ancient Khorezmian epigraphy, written in letters of Aramaic origin (with ideograms), closely related to Parthian and early Sogdian, are not so rich in linguistic material. The main source of our information about the Khorezmian language is Khorezmian words and phrases, even entire dialogues, preserved in Arabic-language writings of the X.-XIII. centuries.

The Bactrian language is the language of ancient Bactria, a historical region along the upper and middle reaches of the Amu Darya, between the Gissar Range in the north and the Hindu Kush in the south. Captured in the II. century BC by the movements of the Saka and Tohara tribes, this area later became known in the sources as "Tokharistan" ("The Country of Tokhars"), and its language was "Tokhar" ("Tokhari"). The only significant monument of the Bactrian language is the inscription from Surkh-Kotal (Northern Afghanistan), discovered in 1957 by the French archaeological expedition and first published by Mr Marick.

The inscription contains 25 lines of text, carved by a special kind of Greek script, adapted by the Kushans to write the local language and is usually called "Tocharian".

Scripture

The Persian language, which even in its most recent form was a rarity until the end of the last century, can now be traced through a long period of time. This was first done in 1836 by Professor Lassen's ingenious deciphering of the cuneiform script; and this first attempt has been continually improved and supplemented by Mr Beer, Mr Rawlinson and, above all, by Mr Lassen himself. The material that monuments give us is not big enough to produce fully the grammar of Old Persian, but it gives us a general picture of this language.

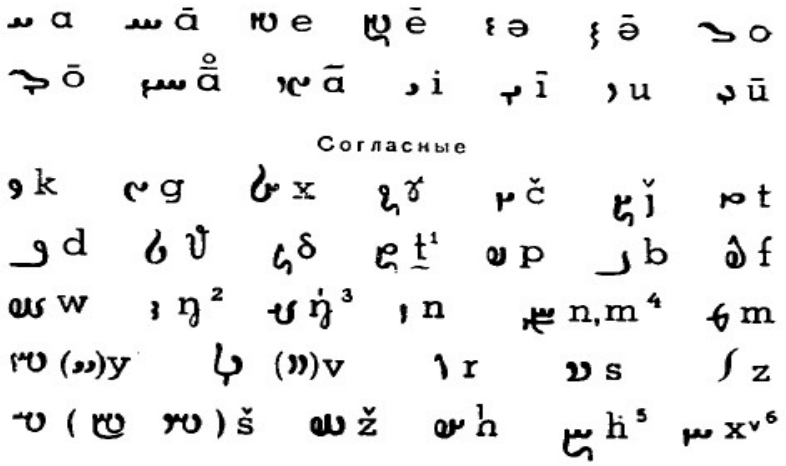
The naming *Persian language* can be understood in a broader and narrower sense. In a broader sense, it means the languages that are spoken and confessed within the area that we call *Persia*, in the narrower sense, the language that the Persians themselves spoke and that was and still is peculiar to them. In that broader sense, the name *Persian* is not entirely appropriate, according to Mr Lassen who used the name "Iranian" for this purpose.

The Old Persian language shows itself as a close relative of Sanskrit, but without to be regarded as its dialect. The phonetic system is still very simple; Old Persian has only the vowels *a, i, u*. The inflections of the Old Persian language are not fully known to us, the declination probably differs in vowel and consonant-like words like in the related languages. The pronoun shows a stem *tya*, identical to the Sanskrit of the Vedas, which lacks the other Old Persian language, the Zend, and *awa* which is found in Zend, but not in Sanskrit

The Avestan alphabet was compiled in the late Sasanian period. This is indicated by the coincidence of some signs with the signs of the "book Pahlavi", which significantly differed from the signs of the early Sassanian inscriptions. Central Iranian alphabets of the Aramaic origin are not developed. The alphabet of the "book Pahlavi", which served as the basis for Avesta, in the form that has reached us, has only 16 characters, except for some characters distinguished by diacritical signs, always only optional. The Avestan alphabet, on the contrary, represents "embarras de richesses". The exact number of characters is not established. Mr Bartolome distinguishes fifty-two characters, stipulating that three of them are ligatures, and one is a variant of Iranian manuscripts, unlike Indian ones. Mr Reichelt distinguishes fifty-one signs (48 + 3 ligatures).

The phonetic significance of letters is determined mainly by the pronunciation of Modern Parsi. But since this pronunciation has changed both in time and in dialects, attempts are made to attract comparative historical comparisons.

Avestian Alphabet



Mr Andreas suggested that such characters initially expressed different sounds. So, he considers the sign *š* as a ligature *hr*. Mr Bailey considers this sign as a ligature for *šy*. Mr Morgenstierne believes that the three signs for *š* really expressed different sounds – *š, rt, r*, but over time the pronunciation of the sounds merged, and the signs began to be used indifferently. The difference in the use of two signs for *y* and two signs for *v* is obvious: the first variants are written only at the beginning of the word, the second – in other cases, although the reason for this difference is not clear. Mr Benveniste finds positional differences for three *š*: 1) before *y*, 2) before *p*, *t, k, č* and at the end of the word, 3) in other cases.

	Altpersisch	Awestâ.
1. Vocale:	*a â*	*a â âo*
		ĕ é
		ę ǫ
	i	*i ī*
	u	*u ū*
2. Diphthonge:	*ai âi*	*ai âi oi*
	au âu	*ao âu éu*
3. Nasalirte Vocale:	— —	*ã, aĝ, aǰ(i), aĝ(u)*
4. Consonanten:	*k kh g*	*k kh g gh*
	c s sh j z	*c s sh, ś, (xhk) j z zh*
	t th d	*t th d dh (ḍ)*
	p f b	*p f b w*
	y r v	*y, hy, iy, r, v hv(q) uv*
	n m	*n ñ m (hm)*
	h	*h*

Spiegel's System of Sounds in Old Persian and Avesta

Morphology

The ancient Iranian languages are among the languages of the synthetic system with inflectional forms of the declension of names and verb conjugation. The main tools of word formation and inflection in them are: 1) internal inflection, that is, by replacing sounds inside the root (or stem), 2) reduction of the roots, 3) affixation, 4) inflectional endings, combining several grammatical elements: case, number, gender, voice, time and mood.

Changes within the root or stem (inner inflection) in the ancient Iranian languages are manifested in grammar due to the alternation of the vowel *a* (short) with the *ā* (long) and zero-stem (i.e., the complete absence of the vowel). Since vowels are replaced on a quantitative basis (long vowel // short vowel), this type of alternation is usually called "quantitative". Three stages of root vocalization are distinguished: 1) zero or initial, 2) middle or main (in the Indian terminology *guna*) and 3) long (in the Indian terminology *vrddhi*). Schematically, the main types of alternation of vowels can be represented by the following table:

Table 7

Zero	Medium	Long
-	*a*	*ā*
i	*ai*	*āi*
u	*au*	*āu*
r	*ar*	*ār*
n	*an*	*ān*

Of the affixes, suffixes are the most common. Prefixes are found mainly in verbs. Infixation has a very limited use in the formation of some verb stems.

In ancient Iranian languages, the following independent (significant) parts of speech can be found: nouns, adjectives, pronouns, numerals, verbs, adverbs. Connective words are represented in the form of prepositions and conjunctions.

Nouns and adjectives are characterized by the presence of the following grammatical categories: gender, case and number. There are three genera: male, female, and middle. The gender of nouns was an independent category. Each of the nouns belonged to a particular gender and could not change it. A change in the gender of a noun, if it occurred, usually led to the formation of a new word: cf. *aspa* 'horse', *aspā* 'mare'. Adjectives are a dependent gender category. They changed by gender, according to the noun. This is the main morphological difference between adjectives and nouns. Otherwise, they had much in common: similar types of stems, the same case inflection.

The gender of nouns from a grammatical point of view was expressed:

1) by the type of a stem: for example, all names with the stem on *-a* were masculine or neuter, all names with the stem on *-ā* were feminine;

3) by the nature of some case endings: for example, with the stem on *-a*, masculine nouns in the nominative case did not have an ending (at the end of the

word was the vowel *-a* of the stem), in the middle gender they had the ending *-m* (the same as in accusative case);

3) by agreement, i.e. by the form of the adjective or demonstrative pronoun.

Table 8

Avesta	Vedic	Meaning
āp-	*áp-*	*water*
tanū-	*tanú-*	*body*
nar-	*nár-*	*man*
gāu-	*gaú-*	*cow*
gairi-	*girí-*	*mountain*
vīs-	*vís-*	*tribe,village*
vastra-	*vástra-*	*cloth*
vāta-	*vāta-*	*wind*
vačah-	*váčas-*	*word, voice*
nāman-	*náman-*	*name*
pitar-	*pitár-*	*father*
brātar-	*bhrátar-*	*brathe*
būmī-	*bhúmī-*	*Earth, ground*
dvar-	*dvār-*	*door*

A change in the gender of adjectives occurred by changing the nature of the stem.

There were eight cases in the ancient Iranian languages: nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, instrumental, ablative, locative and vocative. The number was different - singular, dual and plural. Categories of cases and numbers were expressed by case inflection.

A qualitative adjective is also characterized by the category of degrees of comparison, expressed through special suffixes.

Grammatically pronouns are very heterogeneous. So, for example, personal pronouns are characterized by the presence of categories of person, number and case. They are characterized by a supplementary form of declension, i.e., case forms in some cases are formed from different stems: the personal pronoun of the 1st person singular in the nominative case is Avest. *azəm*, Old Pers. *adam* 'I'; in the genitive case – Avest. *mana,* Old Pers. *manā* 'mine'.

Numerals are also morphologically heterogeneous. Quantitative numerals are alien to the categories of gender, number, and case (although in the Avestan language there are case forms of some numerals). Ordinal numerals in terms of grammatical properties are close to adjectives.

The verb as a special part of speech is characterized by the presence of categories of voice, person, number, time and mood. The two main voices – active and medial – differ in the types of personal endings. For the formation of passive voice, there is a special fundamental suffix *-ya*.

Adverbs and connectives are unchangeable parts of speech.

The Avestan language is more archaic from the morphological point of view. In the Old Persian language, there are traits indicating the beginning of the decay of the case system. This is manifested in the fact that some cases in it coincided in form. For example, the genitive, dative, instrumental, and ablative cases coincide by the names with the stem on *-a*; the names with the stem on *-ā* have the same situation with the genitive, ablative, and instrumental cases. The locative of all types of stems is almost never used without the postposition *ā*. An exception in this respect is only proper names.

4
MIDDLE IRANIAN LANGUAGES

The Middle Iranian language era covers the period from the IV.-III. centuries BC up to the VIII.-IX. centuries AD. This period of history of the Iranian languages is characterized by deep shifts in their grammatical system, gradual decomposition, disintegration of ancient inflectional system, gradual strengthening of a role of analytical elements. This process can be visually tracked.

If monuments of Old Persian give us a language picture with inflectional system, then the monuments of Middle Persian show that in some parts of speech the system of inflection completely disappeared. Middle Persian does not know grammatical category of gender, the system of personal conjugation, which is characterized by endings depending on gender, number and case, does not know suppletive conjugation of pronouns. Finally, the grammatical category of dual number died off here; considerable changes, simplifications happened also in verbal system, the number of inflectional forms of a verb reduced, the forms of Past Tense formed from Present Tense went out of use. Compare the reduction:

Table 9

	Old Persian	**Middle Persian**
Nominative	*pársa*	*párs*
Genitive-Dative	*pársahyā*	*párs*
Accusative	*pársam*	*párs*
Locative	*pársaiy*	*párs*
Ablative	*pársā*	*párs*

Similar processes happened during this period in other Iranian languages as well, though to smaller degree of intensity. In the East Iranian languages, the system of inflection was steadier, than in West Iranian.

Transition to the Middle Iranian stage is characterized by noticeable shifts in the phonetic system of the Iranian languages. Such processes as monophtongization of ancient diphthongs (ai>ā, ou>ō), spirantization (in certain positions) of ancient gutturals can be observed on the material not only of the West Iranian, but also of the East Iranian languages. Such changes are observed even on limited material of the

Iranian proper names kept by the Greek inscriptions of the Northern part of the Black Sea Coast.

Table 10

Old Iranian language epoch	Middle Iranian language epoch	
Avesta and Old Persian	Middle Persian	Parthian
θr/θ^{r}	***s***	***hr***
puθra/puθ^{r}a "son"	*pus*	*puhr*
θri/θ^{r}i "three"	*sē*	*hē*
z/d	***d***	***z***
zān/dān "know"	*dān*	*zān*
j/ĵ	***z***	***ž***
jan/ĵan "beat"	*zan*	*žan*

West Iranian Languages

The West Middle Iranian languages include Middle Persian (south-western subgroup) and Parthian (north-western subgroup).

The Western languages used a writing system based on the Aramaic alphabet. The application of an alien Semitic script to the Iranian languages caused the ambiguity of some letters and ligatures. Short vowels were not indicated or were indicated irregularly, and long ones could not be indicated (for example, *prmtr* **framatār*). The complexity of writing was compounded by the use of ideograms and the historical principle of spelling. When reading Aramaic ideograms they were mechanically replaced by Iranian equivalents (Iranian endings could be attributed to Aramaic ideograms).

In the Middle Persian language, for example, the connectives *hast* 'there is' and *nest* 'no', 'not available' are transmitted by the ideograms YT and L'YT, respectively, the adjective *vattar* 'worse' – SLYtl, etc.

The process of interpreting Semitic ideograms was called in the Middle Persian *uzvārišn*, 'disclosure'. There were special ideogram dictionaries, for example, 'Frahang i pahlavik'.

Of particular difficulty is italic writing, for example, in Middle Persian papyruses of the VII. century. Manichaean texts are also written in a variety of Aramaic writing, but the principle of spelling is not historical, but phonetic; there are no ideograms. For the Middle Persian language, transcription was also used in Avestan letters (Pazend) and Arabic letters (Parsi).

The vocalism of the Middle Persian language is represented by the following phonemes: *a, ā, i, ī, u, ū, ō, ē*. The Parthian vocalism is not exactly established. Apparently, it is very similar to Middle Persian. Mr Gilen indicates the presence of diphthongs *ai, ay, āy, au, av, āv*.

The consonantism of the Middle Persian and Parthian languages includes *p, t, k, b, d, g,* affricates *č, j*; then *f, s, š, x, h*; then *v, γ, z, ž;* and sonants *m, n, l, r, y*.

East Iranian Languages

The East Middle Iranian languages include Sogdian, Khorezm, Sak, and Bactrian. In Eastern languages, as well as in Western ones, alphabets of Aramaic origin were used (varieties of Sogdian writing, Khorezmian writing of documents from Toprak-kala and Tok-kala). However, other writing systems were used along with them: the Indian Brahmi (for the Khanotosak language), Greek (for Bactrian). Khorezmian words and phrases found in Arabic writings are transmitted by Arabic alphabet and additional icons.

The alphabets of Aramaic origin in the East Middle Iranian languages were characterized by the same features as in the Western languages, i.e. systems of ideograms, ligatures, archaized spelling, and polyphony. The sign denoting one sound could double or even triple, and, conversely, one consonant could mean two.

In Sogdian writing, there are much fewer ideograms than in Pahlavi and Parthian. These are some names, prepositions, adverbs, an article: MR'Y, MRY' **xwatāw* 'my lord', L' **nē* is a negative particle, ZK **xō* is an indicative pronoun and an article, etc.

Later Sogdian writing is italic. Various religious cults of the Sogdians (Christian, Manichaean, Buddhist) were served by varieties of Aramaic writing. Actually, Sogdian writing was characterized by historical spelling, Manichaean and Christian writing fluctuated between phonetic and historical spelling.

In the field of phonetics, the East Iranian languages of the considered era differ from the West Iranian languages. The following can be given as an example:

a) The Old Iranian explosives *b, d, g* remain in the West Iranian languages, but pass into corresponding *β, δ, γ* in the East Iranian languages.

Table 11

Old Iranian	**Middle Iranian**	
	West Iranian languages	**East Iranian languages**
b-	***b-***	***β-***
band- "band"	*band-*	*βnt-*
bar- "carry"	*bar-*	*βyr-*
d-	***d-***	***δ-***
dār- "have"	*dār-*	*δār-*
daiva-"evil spirit"	*dēv-*	*δyw-*
g-	***g-***	***γ-***
gauša-"ear"	*gōš-*	*γwš-*
grab-"take, understand"	*grift-*	*γrβ-*

b) The Old Iranian *h* remains in West Iranian, but drops out in East Iranian.

c) The Old Iranian *-xt-, -ft-* remain in the West Iranian languages, but are reflected as corresponding in the East Iranian languages.

The main sign of the East Iranian languages is an affricate *c*, which is never found in languages of the West Iranian group.

5
MODERN IRANIAN LANGUAGES

Modern Persian is a direct continuation of Middle Persian, differed from it only in shifts in the system of consonantism and in the grammatical system of some parts of speech, mainly a verb. Very noticeable changes happened during the Modern Iranian era in lexical structure of the Persian which apprehended enormous quantity of Arabian words.

The vocalism of the North-Western Iranian languages is very heterogeneous. A number of long vowels is represented by phonemes *ī, ē, ā, ō, ū*; short ones are represented by phonemes *i, a, u*. Long vowels are qualitatively stable, short ones can allow significant fluctuations in their rise.

In the Kurdish, Talysh and Mazanderan languages, the quantitative opposition of vowels is already carried out according to the characteristic "stable – unstable" or "reducible – non-reducible".

Table 12

Language	Contrast
Balochi	long *ī, ē, ā, ō, ū*; short *i, a, u*.
Gilian	long *ī, ū*; short *i, e, ə, a, o, u*.
Mazandaran	stable *i, e, ə, a, o, u*; unstable *ɛ*.
Talysh	stable *i, e, ə, a, o, u/ü*; unstable *ъ*.
Kurdish	stable *i, e, ə, a, o, u*; unstable *ь, ö*.

Diphthongs as independent phonemes in the north-western languages are not represented. The consonant systems of individual languages and even the dialects of the north-western group are very different.

In the Kurdish language – in the Kurmanji dialect – the voiceless consonants (simple and affricate) are divided into respiratory *p', t', k', c'* and non-respiratory *p, t, k, c*, in some dialects the upper pharyngeal *h* stands out in contrast to the lower pharyngeal *h*. In addition, a marked consonant *x°* is noted, which is absent in other north-western languages.

In the Balochian language, significant differences can be traced between the consonantism of the western and eastern dialects. Both dialects reveal a number of cerebral consonants that are not common to other north-western languages, as well as the absence of labial-dental sounds. The phoneme *h* is noted only in some western and eastern dialects; it is absent in the dialects of Balochi. The East Beluga dialects, unlike the western ones, have a series of voiceless and sonorous aspirates: *p', t', k', c', b', d', g', j', w'*, as well as a bilabial voiceless slotted 'f' and *ϑ/θ*.

In the Talysh language, there is a contrast between the *k, g* and the *k', g'*. The consonantism systems of the Gilian and Mazandaran languages basically coincide.

Table 13

Old Persian	Middle Persian	Farsi Kabuli	Tajik	Khazara	Persian	Tat
a	*a*	*a*	*a*	*a*	*ä*	*æ*
ā	*ā*	*ā*	*ō*	*ō*	*ā*	*a*
i	*i*	*i*	*i*	*i*	*e*	*ÿ*
ī	*ī*	*ī*			*ī*	*i*
ai	*ē*	*ē*	*ē*	*ē*		
u	*u*	*u*	*u*	*u*	*o*	*ÿ*
ū	*ū*	*ū*			*ū*	*u*
au	*ō*	*ō*	*ů*	*ů*		

The stress in the north-western Iranian languages is forceful; gravitates to the end of the word.

The structure of a word and syllable varies markedly in languages. In general, the general tendency for this group is to prevent the concordance of consonants at the beginning of the word, but in a number of cases, especially in the East Balochian dialects, this tendency is violated.

New Persian of Classical Literature	Modern Persian	Modern Tajik
دوستان ازمن درخواست کردند که این کتابرا به فارسی ترجمه کن		Дӯстон аз ман дархост карданд, ки ин китобро ба форсӣ тарҷима кун.

Most north-western languages as a whole retained more inflectional features than south-western languages, not only modern, but also of the Central Iranian period (for example, Middle Persian). It should be noted that some non-written languages of small ethnic groups in the north-western group, for example, the central dialects of Iran, have advanced further in the way of analysis than such large languages as Kurdish or Balochi. It is not necessary to speak about the influence of writing, since even the largest north-western language – Kurdish – writing has a relatively recent history (with the exception of sporadically appearing separate outstanding monuments of literature since the XI.-XII. centuries).

Thus, it is impossible to establish any relationship between the degree of analyticity of the language and its literary processing, although with regard to south-western languages there is an opinion that the high analyticity of the Persian and Tajik languages is associated with their ancient literary traditions. However, the example of small north-western languages refutes the notion of a direct relationship between these two factors.

The presence of inflection characterizes the name (not in all languages) and the verb. Thus, in a number of north-western languages, the gender category was already absent in the Middle Persian language (Kurdish, a number of dialects of Central and

North-Western Iran), a two-case and a three-case declension system. At the same time, analytical methods for expressing syntactic relations using prepositions and postpositions were widely developed.

As for the verb system, analytical formations occupy a large place in it, which in principle repeats the general picture of verb conjugation that arose already in the Middle period of the development of the West Iranian languages. It is characterized by the duality of conjugation, the use of participles and auxiliary verbs for the formation of individual forms of time (especially the Past Tense), analytical methods of expressing gender and number of the subject by using pronouns, etc.

Word formation is characterized by suffixation and word composition. One can note a mixture of two types of indicators: inflective (for example, in the Kurdish language, the end of the indirect case expresses gender, number) and agglutinative (for example, the plural indicator of the noun *-an*, as a rule, does not combine other functions, although in a number of languages it appears at the end of the indirect case).

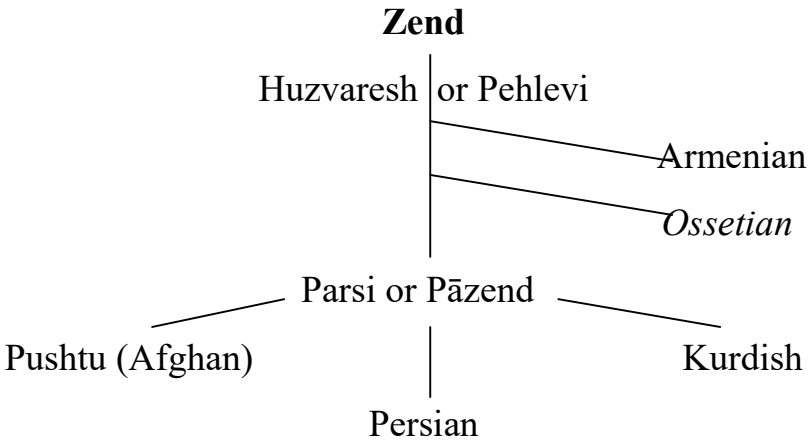
In the north-western languages, morphemes, both word-building and form-forming, are standardized and universal in that they are not divided into groups depending on the class of stems or roots, since these classes were lost in the process of decomposition of ancient inflection. And this, in turn, led to the absence in modern north-western languages of various types of declension and conjugation. If there are some differences in the formation of verb (nominal) stems, then this does not affect the verb (nominal) inflection. All this does not apply in full only to the Kurdish language (Kurmanji), where there are some differences in the type of stems, as well as different types of nominal inflection, internal and external, which allows one to distinguish up to two (three) types of declension.

Both the name and the verb have more inflectional indicators, and they are more diverse than in the south-western languages (different endings of indirect cases, variety of verb inflection).

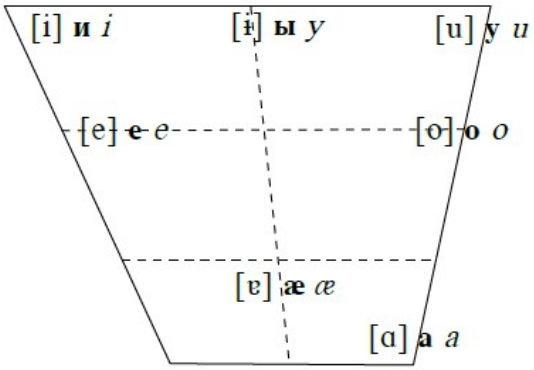
Verbal indicators in a number of the north-western languages have not reached the degree of universality that is observed in the south-western languages. A good example is the Talysh language, in which the vowel element of the verb ending varies depending on the form of tense and mood (for example, the ending of the first person singular has the following form: Present Tense *-am*, Future Tense *-em*, Imper. I *-im*, Opt. *-om*, whereas, for example, in Persian the 1st person singular, regardless of the time and inclination of the verb form, is characterized by the inflection *-äm*).

***

A special part must be shortly devoted to the Ossetic language. According to Mr Taraporewala, “Ossetic is an East Iranian language, but it now found in the Caucasus region. It is surrounded by the Caucasian languages and seems to have been influenced by them for some extent. Some scholars think it is derived from the Sarmatian”. The title „Ossetic“ goes back to the denominatum *osni* „Ossetians“ or *oseti*. The toponym *iron* „ossetic“ takes its meaning from *ir* (< protoiranian ***arya-* „man“). Ossetic possesses three dialects: *Ironian*, *Digorish* and *Tualish*.



The Ossetic language has seven vowels: *i, e, a, ə,* ā, *o, u.* Their classification is schematically given by Mr Schäfer:



The system of Ossetic consonants is fully represented by Mr Abaev:

Articulation		**Explosive**		**Fricative**	
		Simple	**Affricate**	**Non-Sonor**	**Sonor**
Labial	**Bilabial**	*p, p', b*			*m*
	Labio-Dental			*f, v*	
Glossal	**Blade**	*m, m', d*	*ts, ts', dz*	*s, z*	*n, l, r*
	Dorsal		*tch, tch', dž*	*š, ž*	
	Velar	*k, k', g*			
	Guttural	*h'*		*h, g'*	

In noun paradigma, Ossetic distingishes between Singular und Plural. The morphem of Plural is *-tə*. The system of casus is agglutinative: Nominative (Singular *-ø,* Plural *-a*), Genitive-Accusative *-ə,* Dative *-an,* Illative *-ma* (Singular), *-am* (Plural), Ablative *-ay* (*-ya* after a vowel), Inessive *-ə* (= Genitive), Adessive *-əl*, *-wəl,* Equative *-aw,* Comitative *-ima.*

The flexion of verbs is much alike – than that of nouns – the Iranian type.

Comparative Table of Iranian Languages

Table 14

Avesta	Old Persian	Skyphian	Middle Persian	Sogdian	Modern Tajik	Modern Persian
			Relations			
pitar-	pitar-	pitā	piδar	ptr	padar	pedār
mātar-	mātar-	mātā	māδar	m't	modar	mādār
			Body Parts			
sarah-	-	sara	sar	sr	sar	sār
dantan-	-	dantā	dandān	dnt'	dandon	dāndān
			Animals			
aspa-	asa-	aspa	asp	'sp	asp	āsp
būza-	-	-	buz	-	buz	boz
			Verbs			
bar-	bar-	-	bar-	βr-	bar	bār
dār-	dār-	dār-	dār-	δ'r-	dor	dār
			Things and Phenomena			
awra-	-	abra-	abr	-	abr	ābr
Ossetian	**Afghan**	**Rushan**	**Beludji**	**Kurdish**	**Yagnob**	
			Relations			
fidā	plār	ped	pis	-	-	'father'
māda	mor	mõd	mās	-	-	'mather'
			Body Parts			
sār	sar	-	sar	sari	sār	'head'
dāndag	-	δendon	dendank	dəran	dindak	'tooth'
			Animals			
āfsā	ās	-	asp	hāsp	asp	'horse'
-	wuz	vaz	buz	bəzən	wuz	'goat'
			Verbs			
-	wr	vār	bar	bər	var	'cary'
dar	lar	δer	dār	-	dor	'hold'
			Things and Phenomena			
arv	owrə	-	-	ewir	-	'cloud'

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